ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED001194	N.A.	N.A.

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S):
Tisdall, William J., Birch, Jack W. and Barney, W. David

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
Early Admission to School for Selected Children

6. PUBLICATION TITLE:
N.A.

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

7. EDITOR(S):
N.A.

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
Cooperative Research Program of the Of. of Education, H.E.W., Washington, D.C.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. School of Education University of
ST. Pittsburgh,
CITY, STATE Pittsburgh, Pa.
TELE. EXT. 15213
INST/LOC CODE

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	22

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: research

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

Early Admission		Counseling	Field Demonstration
Behavior Ratings		Social Difficulties	Acceleration
Emotional Maturity Ratings		Adjustments	
		Academic Progress	

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

According to N.E.A. (1958), only one in every five school districts had exceptions to an arbitrary admission school age, and admission was usually due to parent initiative. A field demonstration of early admission was initiated in Warren, Pennsylvania (to last for two years), to assure that the tested processes and favorable results of early admission would be called to the attention of educators and the public. It began with a public campaign aimed at informing the community. Efforts were made to conduct the demonstrations within the practices of the school system. Nineteen early entrants, ranging in ages from three years eleven months to four years eight months, participated. First grade teachers reported that satisfactory or better academic progress was being made by these children at the time. The Warren School Board has decided to continue the program.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OF PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ED001194

TD 4

EARLY ADMISSION TO SCHOOL FOR SELECTED CHILDREN

William J. Tisdall, Assistant Professor
Jack W. Birch, Professor
W. David Barney, Visiting Research Professor*

School of Education
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213

The research reported herein was supported
through the Cooperative Research Program
of the Office of Education,
U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

*Dr. Barney has returned to his regular position on the faculty of the University of Auckland, Auckland C1, New Zealand.

REPRINTED BY PERMISSION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PRINTED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

The Problem

An arbitrarily determined age for school entry persists in spite of general recognition that marked variations in capacity for learning and in readiness for school attendance are discernible even in pre-school years. The legal minimum age of admission varies quite markedly from one state to another and from one country to another, but rarely from one child to another in a school district.

Exceptions to an arbitrary admission age may be found in only about one school district in five (NEA, 1958). Intellectually superior younger children who are ready for school in all respects may gain entrance, but usually not on the initiative of teachers and principals; those who should be most eager to get the children into the rich learning environment of the school. In most instances, parents must be aware that they can apply for consideration, be sufficiently interested to do so, and in many places they must furnish the psychological and physical reports on the child along with the application.

Kindergarten and primary grades are expected to have very flexible programs to accommodate the wide-ranging aptitudes of children who come to school. Yet hardly any rules of the schools are more adamant than the arbitrary regulations about admission.

As Barney (1963b) has stated:

> This inflexibility in admission practices would not be so serious if schools were prepared to adopt programs geared to the needs of individual children at entry. But too often, at widely varying stages of readiness and overall readiness for academic learning, they are admitted to formal and inflexible programs. Perhaps we should be aiming at flexible admission to flexible programs, followed by flexible progression.

Efforts are apparent across the land to increase the age of admission (NEA, 1963). These efforts may be justified for some youngsters. But such a change, when it occurs, always deals a damaging blow to the younger bright children who have shown in the past that they can do well under the lower entry age, but who would now be barred from admission to school when they are ready. Both the "critical periods" hypothesis of Hebb (1949) and the "teachable moment" theory of Havighurst (1948) imply that training can be induced too late as well as too early; a very important issue in the education of the young, highly able child.

Early admission to school, either in kindergarten or first grade, is a special case of acceleration. In turn, acceleration at admission is a special case of variable age admission or flexible age admission.

Where the curriculum is substantially fixed within reasonable bounds as it is in kindergarten and the primary grades, and where the children who approach the

curriculum are known to differ markedly in their capacity to learn the content of the curriculum, it is only reasonable that the children should be assessed individually and admitted when they have capacity to do the work. The result would be narrowing the lower end of the spread of readiness, thus bringing more children within reach of the teacher's range of effective teaching procedures.

The Background

Despite repeated research reports on the overwhelmingly favorable consequences of early admission to school for carefully selected children of gifted and superior intellectual levels, the practice is neither widely nor frequently used (Anderson, 1961). Although highly recommended (Worcester, 1956) as the most favorable form of acceleration, early admission to school seems neither generally well known nor well understood among practicing educators.

All common forms of school acceleration for mentally advanced children and youth have been investigated intensively and favorable findings have been characteristic of such research with respect to both short- and long-range effects. Documentation on the matter is found from the reports of Terman (1947), as well as such recent summaries as those of Norris (1958), Fliegler and Bish (1959), and Birch and Reynolds (1963). Acceleration through early admission to school finds support in the

studies described by Hobson (1948), Smith (1951), Monderer (1953), Birch (1954), Kazienko (1954) Mueller (1955) and Cutts and Moseley (1957). It is evident from this list that the practice of early admission to school for properly selected mentally advanced children has been researched extensively and the evidence, including that from longitudinal studies extending into the college years, has demonstrated beneficial results, both personal, social and academic. A concise delineation of the research literature pertaining to the matter of early school admission for gifted children may be found in the recent monograph edited by Reynolds (1962). Early admission practices in four different kinds of school districts are also described in the Reynolds monograph. Altogether, this small publication provides the most comprehensive and accurate professional publicity that early entry has had.

Although Brookline, Massachusetts, introduced early admission 30 years ago and has since carried out follow-up studies, very little publicity has accompanied it (Barney, 1963a). What there is provides very little detailed information on such things as administrative procedures, costs, increased work loads for teachers, psychologists and administrators in assessing, individually, the complete pre-school year group, in identifying the gifted who are socially, physically and emotionally ready

for school, and in admitting them early. Nor has there been systematic assessment and recording of the reasons for community and professional opposition to such a modification of well-established traditional practice, nor of devices employed, where necessary, to modify negative attitudes (see Hobson, p. 22 in Reynolds, 1962).

The Demonstration

A field demonstration of early admission was initiated in Warren, Pennsylvania, to assure that the tested processes and the favorable results of early admission would be called to the attention of educational leaders, as well as the general public. It was felt that a widely publicized and carefully controlled demonstration should bring the highly significant research findings on early admission into much fuller use. As the project title indicates, it is a field demonstration of the effectiveness and feasibility of incorporating early entry into the regular admission practices of a complete school district.

The present demonstration, assisted by a grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Cooperative Research Branch, and by the Warren Schools and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction, is designed for maximum visibility.

A variety of communication channels are being employed to reach professional and lay persons.

The demonstration is taking place in Warren, Pennsylvania. This city of 15,000 population is in northwestern Pennsylvania, 145 miles from Pittsburgh and 45 miles from Erie. Socio-economically, Warren has a broad cross-section of levels, with a tendency to be slightly above average. A well-established community and a county seat, it is the site of diversified industries including oil, steel fabrication, and electrical equipment and clothing manufacturing. The operation of kindergartens has long been a part of the school system.

The early admission demonstration project began with a publicity campaign designed to inform the community of the purpose of the project and the procedures that would be adopted. One aim was to demonstrate that a typical school system could operate an early entry program. Therefore, the organization of the program was left to the local administration with the staff at the University of Pittsburgh acting as consultants. The project has been extremely fortunate in having an enthusiastic administrative staff, eager to serve the individual children in their district.

The official beginning of the project in the fall of 1961 was preceded by months of preparation. Several school districts were considered as possible sites. When the focus rested on Warren as the most likely spot, interviews with school officials, discussions with the members of the Board of Education, and deeper analysis of the population all were necessary. Such prior understandings and arrangements for facilities are much more an integral part of a demonstration than they might be in an experimental project. For the latter, of course, the stage must be set. But for a demonstration the setting of the stage itself may furnish data bearing directly on the evaluation of the project.

Every effort has been made to conduct the demonstration within the already existing policies and practices of the Warren School System. The psychologists who examine the children had been in the employ of the school district on a part-time basis. The census data on families is an extension of the work already done by the home and school visitor. The selection of additional group tests for kindergarten and first grade was made in the existing framework of the district's committee on testing programs. This approach seems essential if the demonstration is to achieve its goals, for when external support is concluded it should be

possible for the demonstrating school district to incorporate the project into its normal on-going activities. Indeed, it has already begun to do so.

The home and school visitor, using his pre-school survey results, contacted parents of all children in the age group due to be admitted to kindergarten in September of 1963. He then invited these parents to have their children examined by a school psychologist as part of the early entry survey. Of the 257 children listed in the census, all but 28 were brought by their parents for examination. Follow-up visits by the home and school visitor showed that some of these 28 families had left the district, some were disinterested, and some felt their child would not qualify and so saw no point in the examination. In the first year, then, the psychologists made a comprehensive individual assessment of 229 children.

The 1960 revision of the Stanford-Binet Scale and the Goodenough Draw-A-Man Test were administered to each child and ratings of behavior and emotional maturity were made by the psychologists during the test session. In addition to these test and rating scales, parents were asked to complete a comprehensive case history form while the child was with the psychologist and later to act as informants for the Vineland Social Maturity

Scale. A check on height and weight was made and the parents were questioned regarding the child's health. Where any indication of below-par physical status existed, the family or school physician was consulted.

In all cases the results were discussed with the parents. In a few cases, where the parents reported problems of training or control, some limited counseling was undertaken. Where any deviancy of a more serious nature (e.g., moderate sensory defects) was detected, the parents were referred to appropriate specialists. Subsequent interviews with parents revealed that this final discussion, even where it merely reported on the normality of the child's development, was greatly appreciated. On the basis of these methods of assessment, the psychologists listed 37 children as possible candidates for early admission in the fall of 1962.

The psychologists used multiple criteria, as recommended by Birch's (1954) study, and as further suggested from the findings of Davis, Lesser, French, and others (1960). The major benchmarks are:

1. Individual intelligence quotients of approximately 130 or higher, using standard score IQ's from the Pinneau Revised IQ Tables (Terman and Merrill, 1960).

2. Social maturity approximately one year or more above the standard, based on the Vineland Social Maturity Scale.

3. Sound and well-developed personality, as judged by the examining psychologist from observations of the child's parents. Rating scales have been devised for use in the project in this connection.

4. Physical characteristics not likely to limit the child. Height and weight measurements were made and compared with standard tables for size measurements. A statement regarding the child's general health was obtained from the parents.

Findings to Date

The 37 children tentatively selected by the psychologists were observed by experienced kindergarten teachers at a visit to a session in the neighborhood kindergarten. These were regular sessions and only one prospective early entrant attended at a time. If the teacher felt that the visit did not provide a sufficient sample of the child's behavior, opportunity was given for a return visit. Kindergarten teacher observations, along with the psychologist's, were then considered by a committee appointed by the Superintendent of Schools. The primary criterion which the committee used to arrive at a final recommendation was in all cases overall maturity or readiness (social, emotional, physical and intellectual) to benefit from the type of program to which they would be admitted. The committee made 26 firm recommendations to the parents. This represents 10% of the total population contacted in the age range 3-8 to 4-8 years (as of September, 1962) and 11.6% of the number actually examined.

The ultimate decision on early entry rested with the parents. Nineteen chose to send their children early, as recommended by the school committee.

The families of the 26 children who were recommended by the committee were interviewed to determine reasons for refusal or acceptance of the recommendation and the resource persons in the community they had consulted. Of the 7 who did not enter their child, one family accepted the recommendation but moved from town; another father accepted but the mother rejected, and, later, too late for entry to be effective, changed her mind; a third family agreed to early entry but in the week prior to the opening of school changed their minds on the advice of a pediatrician of the "adverse effect of social immaturity at the secondary school level." Evidence clearly refuting this view is found in the studies of Hobson and others (Keys, 1938). Eventual social difficulty was also the prime concern of the other parents who declined (all parents of boys). Among the parents of the 19 admitted (a higher percentage of them girls than boys), about half reported having decided to accept the recommendation if offered before they actually received the notice from the committee. They were strongly impressed by the thoroughness of the evaluation of readiness of their children made by the school personnel, and they respected and acted upon the advice they were given.

There has been considerable opposition to early entrance programs on the part of both professional and lay persons. Much of this has evidently been the result of attitudes fostered by limited and inaccurate information. Opinions have been voiced about the "dangers" of "pushing" children and of the "materialistic desire" to get them into and therefore out of school early, thereby depriving them of some of the years and joys of childhood. This is not a difficult thesis to counter, as early entry of <u>properly</u> <u>selected</u> children does not involve "pushing" the child. Adequate selection procedures using multiple criteria will insure that the "whole" child is <u>ready</u> for school experience. As for depriving him of the joys of childhood, there is anecdotal evidence from the Warren parents, as well as from the other parts of the country, that young gifted children are frequently happier in the more stimulating environment of the kindergarten or grade one classes than in their own homes. The point really is that children who are <u>not</u> admitted to school when they are ready may be losing some of the joys of childhood, chief among which is successful accomplishment of tasks they are fully capable of doing.

The numbers are small and care needs to be exercised in making judgments, but there is a suggestion of a

parent education factor operating among the parents of the 19 children who were entered early. Among parents with less education the decision appears to have been simple; based on a combination of pride and their own lack of educational opportunity. On the other hand, among parents who were college graduates, some had perceived boredom, disinterest, and a need for a greater range of intellectual stimulus not apparently available in the home. Some noted that their children gravitated to older playmates. All reported that the school committee's advice was the soundest they were likely to get.

Nineteen early entrants were admitted to their respective neighborhood kindergartens in September of 1962, the classes they would have normally entered in September of 1963. Each of Warren's six kindergartens had at least one child in each morning and afternoon session. They were treated as any other kindergarteners.

Their progress has been carefully watched, though unobtrusively. For example, when additional testing is done, regular entrants are examined as well. Early entrants are not identified for visitors, names have not been revealed to the press, and picture story feature articles which would identify the children have not been permitted.

Admission ages ranged from 3-11 to 4-8 years; a third were within 2 months of the minimum age for entry. Had they not been admitted early these children would have entered kindergarten in September of 1963 at the regular chronological age, but with mental ages ranging from 7-2 to 9-0 years, some one to three years beyond the mental age usually designated by American educators as indicating the stage of "readiness" for reading instruction, and with social and emotional maturity similarly advanced! How many American kindergartens would have been "ready" instructionally to match the "readiness" for instruction of those children?

Not all of the 19 made perfect immediate adjustment to the school environment; nor did all of the regular entrants. The initial and continuing adjustment of a number of the regular entrants in each class has, in fact, been poorer than that of the children entered early. The results of reading readiness tests conducted near the end of the 1962-63 kindergarten year indicated that the regular entrant range in percentiles was 0 to 99+ while for early entrants it was 29 to 99, so that much of the same range of readiness was found in both groups.

Kindergarten teachers promoted all 19 of the early entrants to grade one.

Now in first grade, the early entrants' teachers report that all but one are adjusting satisfactorily. The one exception is a child from a broken and emotionally unstable home environment, and that was known before early admission was recommended. Clinical analysis indicated that there could be no guarantee that deferring entry to school for a year would have eliminated such difficulties. In fact, the stabilizing effect of a daily kindergarten program may well have prevented more serious trouble had the child remained at home.

Height and weight measures were taken during the year by the school medical officers and the reports indicated that the younger group members were not generally the shortest nor lightest in their classes. In addition, the younger ones were not distinguishable by visitors to the classes.

In general, first grade teachers report that satisfactory or better academic progress is being made by these children at the present time.

To date, sociometric ratings indicate that the early entrants were chosen equally or slightly more often as companions for activities than were regular entrants. The only firm statement one can make about

these observations is that the younger children were certainly not outsiders in group activities. A more thorough program of sociometric assessment is planned.

Re-examination by different psychologists at the end of the 1962-63 school year revealed the mean Stanford-Binet IQ of the early entrant group to be stable; the mean difference being less than 1/2 of one IQ point from the original pre-school testing (i.e., from an original group mean of 140 to a mean of 139.5 one year later).

An attempt was made part-way through the school year to assess the teachers' attitudes and changes of attitudes toward the early admission project. A 77.5% response indicated that the elementary school group was initially the least favorably inclined of the three groups (elementary, junior high and senior high), but that they made the greatest change in a favorable direction during the nine-month period.

Another highly relevant area of evaluation consists of measures of the impact of the practice of early admission on the school system in terms of such factors as additional costs for instructional and ancillary services, changes in work loads of teachers and supervisors, participation of parents, changes in attitudes toward early admission on the part of educators, related

professional workers, parents and the total community, and modifications in the policies and practices of the school system as consequences of the field demonstration. Some data already collected in the latter area suggests that significant increases are required in the amount of time spent in interpreting the school's admission policies and practices, both to the general public and to the teachers themselves.

One other interesting sidelight bears on the work of the psychologists. Typically, a school or clinical psychologist sees children who have problems or who are making trouble. The usual role of the psychologist is to react in an analytical and diagnostic and possible therapeutic way to a complaint. In this case the psychologists had to reorient themselves violently. Most of the children they saw were normal and healthy, and the psychologists often were at a loss as to what to say to parents or teachers about them.

Because almost all of the children in the community are being examined by psychologists a year or more before they would ordinarily go to school, psychologically and educationally significant attributes of many pre-school children (other than the intellectually superior) are being identified. This, of course, is extremely

valuable information for families, physicians, and for the school authorities to have.

The second wave of early admitted children have now begun kindergarten. During the school year 1962-63 the school psychologists examined 220 children which the census indicated would be eligible for entrance to kindergarten in September, 1964. Following the procedures outlined above, 30 children received favorable recommendations from the psychologists. Of this group, 25 visited kindergarten and the selection committee invited 16 children to enroll in school this year. The parents of 11 of these 16 children accepted the recommendation for early admission. After approximately one month of school experience, none of these children seemed to be experiencing undue problems of adjustment according to their kindergarten teachers.

The demonstrators are particularly pleased with the fact that, although the originally intended duration of the demonstration project was two years, the Warren School Board has decided to continue the practice. This action by the Board of Education is probably the most signal piece of evidence that the early admission project in Warren is rapidly accelerating toward successful fruition. Another manifestation of the impact of disseminated knowledge regarding the Warren project has

been the indication by certain states and other school districts of an awareness of the Warren project and, consequently, of the possibilities of initiating early admission programs.

In summary, this project is in that unique group of activities called "field demonstrations". It starts from a position firmly grounded in research and it translates the research findings to operational terms. In doing so, it applies established investigative techniques, particularly planned data collection and analysis, tight control of processes, systematic observation, and thoughtful reporting of consequences and outcomes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, E.E. (ed.) Research on the Academically Talented Student. National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1961.

Barney, W.D. "Early Admission to School for Mentally Advanced Children: An Aspect of Flexible Admission and Progression." A paper presented at the Conference on Critical Issues Involving State Department of Education Directors of Programs for the Gifted. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March, 1963a. (Mimeographed.)

Barney, W.D. "The Warren Project on the Effectiveness and Feasibility of Early Admission to School for Mentally Advanced Children." A paper presented at the annual convention of the Council for Exceptional Children. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April, 1963b. (Mimeographed.)

Birch, J.W. "Early School Admission for Mentally Advanced Children." Exceptional Children, 21:84-87, December, 1954.

Birch, J.W. and Reynolds, M.C. "The Gifted." Review of Educational Research, Chapter VI, 33:1, February, 1963.

Cutts, N.E. and Moseley, N. Teaching the Bright and Gifted. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957.

Davis, F.B., Lesser, G.S., French, E.G., and others. "Identification and Classroom Behavior of Gifted Elementary School Children." The Gifted Student, OE-35016, Cooperative Research Monograph No. 2. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1960.

Fliegler, L.A. and Bish, C.E. "The Gifted and Talented." Review of Educational Research, 24:5, December, 1959.

Havighurst, R.J. Developmental Tasks and Education. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1948.

Hebb, D.O. The Organization of Behavior. Wiley and Sons, New York, New York, 1949.

Hobson, J.R. "Mental Age as a Workable Criterion for School Admission." Elementary School Journal, XLVII, 312-21, February, 1958.

Kazienko, L.W. "Beginner Grade Influence on School Progress." Educational Administration and Supervision, 40, 1954.

Keys, N. "The Oakland Study: The Underage Student in High School and College: Educational and Social Adjustments." University of California Publications in Education, 7, No. 3, 229-255, 1938.

Monderer, J.H. "An Evaluation of the Nebraska Program of Early Entrance to Elementary School." Doctor's Thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1953. Abstract, Dissertation Abstract, 14:633, 1954, Pt. 1.

Mueller, K. "Success of Elementary Students Admitted to Public Schools under the Requirements of the Nebraska Program of Early Entrance." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1955. Dissertation Abstracts, 15:2103, 1955. Pt. 1.

National Education Association. Admission Policies for Kindergarten and First Grade. Circular No. 3, 1958. National Education Association, Washington, D.C.

National Education Association. "School Entrance Age Policies and Exceptions." NEA Research Bulletin, Vol. 41, No. 3, 77-78, October, 1963.

Norris, D., et al. "Programs in the Elementary Schools." Education for the Gifted, 57th Yearbook, Part II, National Society for the Study of Education, University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Reynolds, M.C. (editor) Early School Admission for Mentally Advanced Children. Council for Exceptional Children, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1962.

Smith, J. "The Success of Some Young Children in the Lincoln, Nebraska Public Schools." Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1951.

Terman, L.M. and Oden, M.H. The Gifted Child Grows Up, Stanford University Press, 1947.

Terman, L.M. and Merrill, M.A. Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Manual for the Third Revision: Form L-M, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960.

Worcester, D.A. The Education of Children of Above Average Mentality, University of Nebraska Press, 1956.